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THE CHRIST-CHILD

AND OTHER POEMS

THE CHRIST-CHILD,

AND OTHER POEMS.

THE CHRIST-CHILD,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

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PREFACE.

AT a time when our country can boast not only four poets of consummate genius and achievement, but a whole legion of thoughtful, musical, and copious verse-writers, I am not so foolish as to imagine that this little volume, even were it very far stronger than it is, coud win its way through them into 'the land of matters unforgot,' and I am far too doubtful of the general appetite for 'minor verse' to suppose that these poems can bring me any other kind of gain. Indeed I publish them at this particular time partly because I expect from them neither name nor profit. A scanty and laborious leisure leaves me small chance of swelling them into a volume from which I coud hope either one or the other, and their publication will at least remove from me enticement to waste time in such an attempt. This of course is

not my only reason for printing them. I suppose that every man who writes verse (or, for that matter, prose), however poor it be, thinks that it will give to a certain number of people that same pleasure in the reading which it gave to himself in the writing, and looks to receive their approval in return: if any one be insensible to such motives for authorship, I am not that one. But I am so little blinded to the weaknesses of this volume that any critic who should do me the honour of noticing it among other 'Recent Verse' needs have but slight fear of wounding its author's feelings.

On one point alone I venture to deprecate too harsh a judgment. While the subject and measures of 'The Death of Œnone' and 'The Air Spirit' were of course suggested by poems of Tennyson, not the faintest attempt was made to copy his manner. But in the style of 'The Christ-Child,' 'The Story of Comatas,' and 'The Second Valentine,' Morrisian influence, however copiously diluted, is plainly present, and I am aware that verse-writers who seek to reproduce the style of a great living poet reap small thank for their ill-bestowed ingenuity. I can

honestly say that I have sought to do nothing of the kind, but have only ventured to use the same broad type of expression for ideas of which it seemed the most fitting vehicle.

And since poetic insight and poetic art are capable of the same continuous development as all other art and insight, and no man likes the unripe fruit of his boyhood to be taken for the best produce of his fuller powers, I may be pardoned for adding that the two longest and most ambitious poems in this volume, as well as that from which its title is taken, were written before the age of twenty. It is the more needful for me to say this because my verses are not in the least likely to meet with a favour which might encourage me to try better things.

It is due to the printers to add that I am responsible for the spellings *coud* (could), *hole* (whole), *holely* (wholly), *iland* (island), *lim* (limb), *rime* (rhyme), *sent sented* (scent, scented), and *tung* (tongue). The modern spellings of these words are sheer blunders, insulting alike to pronunciation and etymology. *Coud* (once *cound*) does not come from a root ending in *l*, like 'should' and 'would': *iland* (igland)

has not the remotest connexion with *isle* (insula), *lim* with *limbus*, or *rime* with *rhythm*: *hole* (cf. *hole-some*) is the same word as *hale*: *tung-e* or *tong-e* did not come to us from the French: *sent* did. These facts are well known to every student of the English language, and, if I recollect rightly, the *Saturday Review* has more than once called attention to some of them, and has favoured a return to the old and rational spelling.

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TO MY WIFE.

THOU in whose love's deep-bosomed bay
  My heart hath anchor at the last,
That many a skyless night and day
  Rocked on the billows of the past—
Whose name should fill my latest line,
And crown my little work, but thine?

Pure and compassionate and true,
  And adding to these things the love
Of all that live beneath the blue,
  And One who lives, we think, above—
Enough if my poor rimes might be
A little like, sweet heart, to thee.

April, 1877.

POEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION.

THE CHRIST-CHILD.

A POEM FOR CHRISTMAS-EVE.

IN a far country many a mile away
  Eastward across the tossing northern sea,
Wherefrom our fathers sailed in olden day,
  But now it speaks another tung than we—
In a far country, as the people say,
  This eve a sweet strange vision takes its flight
  Atwixt the setting sun and dawning light.

East from the Syrian shore 'tis said to come,
  And to the western water as it flies
It stands on every hearth, nor turneth from
  The strawen pallet where the rough carl lies,
But aye before the rich man's gilded home
  The windbeat hut upon the snowy wild
  Knows the soft footfall of the angel-child.

None hear the Christ-Child. Ever silently
  The barred door opens to the tiny hand,

And they alone this night the Christ-Child see
That pass still children to another land
Wherein His love hath called them to be—
Wherein He gathereth the pure and mild,
And young and old are likened to a child.

Yet, though their eyes see not, He standeth there,
As once He rested on a mother's knee—
Clad in white raiment to the ankle bare—
Save that a silver star full lustrously
Ripples upon the golden-floating hair,
And dight with hues of God's own fashioning
Twin pinions from the snowy shoulders spring.

This is the Christ-Child. For each pillowed head
The Christ-Child's lips some simple blessing weave;
On every brow the viewless starbeam shed
Silvers with some fresh joy the yule-tide eve;
Some gnawing care the soundless vision's tread
Drives from the sleep-bound memory. To-night
E'en Judas' slumbers should be long and light.

Then from that country will the sweet sprite go;
Yet whither thence what living man shall say?

No tiny foot-print stamps the new-fallen snow:
Only the voiceless breeze might tell His way.
We for our sins that way must never know:
Mayhap unto our fathers was it known
In purer days and years long since agone.

Yet, if the story of that land be true,
Passeth the Christ-Child westward through the earth,
Still with some gift divine, some succour new,
Encompassing the weary world's wide girth.
Yea, if a hand unseen the billows strew
And hush the ocean gale, then crosseth He
That stilled the troubled wave of Galilee.*

Therefore, fair sirs, before this eve be gone
Think that the Christ-Child at your side shall stand,

---

* Years after the above line was written I found a striking parallel to it in Tennyson's *Aylmer's Field*:—

"... she walk'd
Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of love,
Who still'd the rolling wave of Galilee!"

If I had ever read Tennyson's line I certainly had no recollection of it in writing my own, which came in natural sequence to those before it.

Who by the first streak of the morrow's dawn
  Will plant his foot upon some further land.
So, ere the curtain of to-night be drawn,
  Let me in my poor rime the Christ-Child pray
  To deal you all the blessing that He may.

And, if of this one listeth to enquire,
  Then in your ears the Christ-Child do I crave
To ripen to its full your meet desire,
  And from the Dead Sea apples your soul save;
Unscathed you lead through seven times heated fire,
  And grant you in such wise this year to live
  That yule-tide next He needeth naught to give.

1868.

THE VISION OF JOSEPH.*

I, JOSEPH, son of Heli, of the tribe
Of Judah, carpenter, at Nazareth
In Galilee abiding, being now
Well ripe with many years, and having hope
Before long time be past to be ingathered
Into the bosom of my father Abraham,
Have taken parchment, with mine own hand writ,
And with mine own seal signed, the memory
(Lest it should die with me) of that I saw
Upon the birth-night of my stepson Jesus,
Whom men do vulgarly repute my son,
Not being mine, but of the Spirit of God
Begotten, as an angel of the Lord

---

* This poem is founded on the story of Joseph's vision in the apocryphal "Protevangelium of James." The rest of the work is ordinary narrative, but the vision is told in the first person: "And I, Joseph, was walking and not walking," etc.,—pretending as it were to be taken from some statement by Joseph himself. The paragraph beginning "And suddenly I, Joseph," is a paraphrase of the original.

Forewarned me in a dream. Touching which Jesus
Did many strange things hap at Bethlehem,
Where he was born ; yea, and in afterwhile
Many strange things, whereof the certainty
Is known to faithful witnesses : howbeit
None dareth openly make speech thereof,
Lest men should thrust him from the synagogue
For liar and blasphemer, or perchance
Work him some greater evil. But one thing
I, Joseph, only know, and none beside ;
So, lest the knowledge of it pass away
When I pass, see, here I have written it
In goodly characters, to be revealed,
If God so pleaseth, when the hour shall come
That of this Jesus, Mary's son, the name
And presence shall be great in Israel.
For, that it shall be so, that doubt I not,
Although mine eyes shall see it not, and though
Mine ears shall never hear it. The sun shall rise
Whose dawning dazzles me, and I shall go
Having beheld it not on earth, but hoping
It shall yet shine on me in Paradise.

Therefore be it known that at the time ordained
Of Cæsar for enrolment I went up
From Nazareth, my place of sojourning,

To Bethlehem-Judah, where my fathers sleep;
And with me Mary my espoused wife,
Being great with child. And so it came to pass
That as we drew anigh to Bethlehem
She said, "I am troubled: therefore haste and fetch
Some woman;" and I took her from the ass
And laid her in a cave beside the way,
And hastened me.

And suddenly I, Joseph,
Was walking and not walking, and I looked
Upon the heavens and saw the heavens amazed;
The setting sun set not, the rising moon
Rose not, and all the flying things of air
Flew not, but rested hovering. Then I looked
Upon the earth and saw a company
Of labourers sitting round their evening meal,
And lo, they eating ate not, and the hands
That gathered from the dish were stayed therein,
But all their eyes gazed upward. And thereby
A shepherd drove his sheep into the pen,
And the sheep moved not, and the shepherd's staff
Was raised to smite them, and the staff remained.
And hard beside me was a little brook,
And the brook ran not; and a flock of kids
Were come to drink, and drank not, but their mouths

Were resting on the stream. And all the face
Of all the world was still.

But at the last
The world moved on, and straightway I beheld
A woman coming from the hill-country
Wearing a midwife's badge, and spake with her,
And brought her back with me. But when we came
Behold we found this Jesus born.

The rest
I write not, Mary knows it, and can tell
When this child Jesus stands revealed a prophet
As one of Israel's prophets,* yea, maybe
Elijah's self, or even——but my brain
Grows dull with many years, I dare not trust
The thing I think. Only I clearly know
That I have seen and herein testified,
I, Joseph, son of Heli, of the tribe
Of Judah, carpenter, of Nazareth
In Galilee, as my seal witnesseth.

1870-7.

---

* In Mark vi. 15 "a prophet as one of the prophets" is recognized to be the true reading.

FLORES GETHSEMANE.

(ON THE SUPPOSED * BLOOD-STAINS IN THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.)

I THOUGHT to find no bud of humblest bloom
Here in the barren places of the tomb;
Not even earth's lowliest weed I looked to see
Here where the world is dark continually;
And lo, mid fadeless flowers no sun's warm ray
Nor soft fresh shower hath drawn to life, I stray,
And wander marveling amid blossoms bright,
That lie all open through the long, long night.

Each little purple drop of martyred blood,
I hold it fairer than the new rose-bud;

---

* It is, however, now satisfactorily established that they are merely the stains of Eucharistic wine. See the article "Catacombs" in Smith and Cheetham's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities.*

For these are blossoms sprung of Christ's own root,
And these are blooms that have in heaven their fruit;
These are the flowers most sweet for God to see,
Sweeter than any earthly flowers that be;
These are the flowers most sweet for God to see,
Flowers of the Garden of Gethsemane.

1868.

MORITURA.

I.

Moritura. O WIND on whom the gracious South
Hath shed the fragrance of her mouth,
What pleasure dost thou bear for me?

Notus. To-night my fever-burdened heat
Shall stop for aye thy pulses' beat:
Such pleasure do I bear for thee.

Moritura. South wind, thy sorrow were more glad
Whose pleasure is so passing sad.

II.

Moritura. O sturdy wind that sweepest forth
From icy portals of the North,
What succour wilt thou give to me?

Boreas. For thee to-night my frozen breath
Is laden with the chill of death :
Such succour will I give to thee.

Moritura. North wind, thy blast is strong enow,
Thy succour is but weak, I trow.

III.

Moritura. O wind from out the balmy West,
Of all the winds men love thee best;
What blessing dost thou carry me ?

Zephyrus. The breezes on thy cheek that play
To-night shall steal thy life away :
Such blessing do I carry thee.

Moritura. West wind, thy curse might well be rare
Whose blessing is so hard to bear.

IV.

Moritura. Ill wind, whose cradle is the East,
Of all the winds men love thee least;
Scant comfort coud'st *thou* bring to me.

Eurus. A sound that lives through ages dead,
From off a tree upon a height,
For comfort do I bring to thee;
The echo of a Voice that said,
"Know thou that by my side this night
In Paradise thy place shall be."

Moritura. O wind from barren Calvary,
To gain thou turnest all my loss;
When death is wafted from the Cross,
Then, breezes, waft my life from me!

1871.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

SADLY beneath the darkening skies
Each eve in sleep my head I lay,
And quit the life and light of day,
Nor know if I again shall rise.

Without a joy, without a pain,
I rest, or haply roam the maze
Of bygone years, till morning rays
Call me to light and life again.

And, when my life's long day is o'er,
And shades of death have gathered nigh,
Thus will my painful spirit cry
That I perchance shall wake no more.

Then will I turn faith's latest look
(Though faith be faint and vision weak)
To life's recurring change, and seek
God's parable in nature's book.

Nor doubting what I read therein,
    His mercy will I pray to keep
    From mournful memories my sleep,
And rising shapes of buried sin;

Till longer morrow chase away
    The blindness of that last long night,
    And open to my purer sight
God's love my life, Himself my day.

1872.

THE DEATH OF ŒNONE.

THE DEATH OF ŒNONE.

ARGUMENT.

Paris of Troy being sore wounded sought leechcraft of Œnone, which being by her denied him, he perished, and she for the dole thereof died also. To these and the Trojans was given by the gods a new city in the Elysian fields.

IN the gray twilight, where the clambering pines
Halted before a steep of broken rocks,
Barren and cold and white, but faintly flushed
With dying embers of the crimson west—
In the gray autumn twilight there she stood,
Her eye upon the chamber of the heaven,
Her bloodless hands clasped downward as she spoke.

"O Ida, hear me,—hear, O earth and seas,
And flashings of the interwoven stars,
And bloom innumerable of tree and flower,
And echoes of the many-murmuring streams:
The death hour is upon me, I must speak
Before I perish into nothingness—

Whether against myself or the great gods
Judge ye.
He came to me one eve; I stood
In all the moon's full brightness, looking down
On Ilion and the many camps thereof.
He came, not as in the old happy time
Bounding to meet me with some four-foot prey,
But toiling as a stricken hart that climbs,
With the dark life-blood oozing at each step,
Hoping to reach its fern-hid lair to die.
And in his face a deathly weariness,
As one that maddened by a baleful draught
Cares not for wife or child or any kin,
But only for a golden-armoured snake,
And fondles it and loves it more and more,
Until the spell has wrought its work, and death
Lies hard upon him, and his brain grows changed:
But still he hangs, sickening with many doubts,
Irresolute between the good and ill.
So Paris came, and, standing with bowed head
And suppliant hands before me, brake to speech.

"'Œnone, I have done a grievous wrong:
Yet lo, the gods enforced me, the great gods
With whom there is no striving, Here, Pallas,
Eris, and she, the Paphian. And now

Achilles has slain Hector, I Achilles
Smote in requital with a shaft-borne death,
To fall in turn from a Thessalian aim,
The bow of Philoctetes. Yea, the wound
Lies heavy on me, and the seers have said
No man can heal it, nor the most high gods,
Phœbus or Zeus himself, but only thou.
Now therefore am I come—I had not dared,
Save only for dear life—to pray for mercy.
And she, the Spartan woman, she shall go,
Caressant, fair, and subtle, for all her eyes
Striking as silver lyres into the soul,
For all her roselipped mouth, for all the gold
That breaks adown her shoulders, as the fall
Of sunlit cataracts. Yea, she shall go,
For I perceive she is a snare of heaven
Wherewith to slay the tribes of living men.'

" He paused, as waiting answer, for a while,
But I with fluttering heart stood cold and still.

"'Heal me, Œnone: if I did this wrong,
Or if the gods, am I not punished yet?
I would not send her home, for honour's sake,
Seeing the gods made me infatuate.

Yet she that shamed her husband must have shame,
And I have done her husband double fault,
And double fault to thee. Therefore she goes,
Though all the gods say Nay.'

Again he paused,
I answered not.

'Yea, pity Priamus
And pity Hecabe in pitying me.
For these had fifty sons, but now scarce five;
And if I die, the dearest loved of all,
These two will die. Have pity on these and me,
And thou shalt live the queen of Ilion,
My queen, and I as in the olden days
Thy shepherd lover; and the mighty gods
Will give requital to us, and we shall live
Far onward into many happy years,
Till Zeus or Aphrodite or Artemis
Bear us to fields Elysian. But now
I shall go down among the quivering shades,
Away from life and youth and friends and kin,
Away from all things lovely; and Priamus
Will perish, and my mother; and thou too
Wilt die of anguish if thou heal me not.'

"He ended, but again I answered not:

And with raised head he looked the old old look
That made him seem my love of bygone days,
Faltering more faintly, 'Heal the wound, Œnone,
Bring not these deaths upon us.' And my eyes
Dropped earthwards, and the slowly gathering tears
Struggled against repression, and I strove,
Turning, to hide the weakness of my heart,
That half resolved to heal the wound and die.

"But when I turned again Paris was gone,
Lost in the tangled mazes of the brake;
Paris was gone, Paris was gone to die,
And I had slain him. Thrice I strove to call
His name adown the mountain, thrice the word
Fled backward from my lips. The forest reeled
About me, and from that day until this
My life has been a blank.

This dawn the gods,
Inveterate, sent me reason yet again,
Lest I should perish in forgetfulness,
Unsorrowing. And I rose and heard a voice
Of Wood-Nymph or of Naiad, and it said,
'Lo here Œnone, that hath hither strayed
Unwitting, in her madness.' Thus it spoke,
And gazing up I saw the silver rush

Of waters poplar-fringed on Gargarus;
And, while I gazed, all things came back to me,
Though first as cypress tops that slow and dim
Peer through the melting mist. I had gone mad
What time to Ida wounded Paris came
And went unhealed from me; and at this thought
The distant torrent hissed 'Paris is dead;'
Poplar and pine and cypress and all trees
Whispered in turn the word; the heron hung
Fluttering in midmost flight, the wild swan paused
To echo back the tale 'Paris is dead.'

"And I went forth along the mountain slope,
Purposing I would go to Priamus,
And kneeling pray him slay me with his hands
For that I healed not Paris. Then the stream
Hissed 'Slain is Priamus, and Ilion burnt;'
And poplar, pine, and cypress, and all trees
Took up the burden; heron and wild swan
Screamed 'Priamus is slain, Ilion no more.'

"Then looked I forth, and saw upon the plain
From hearth to temple other smoke arise
Than wont to greet the nostrils of the gods,
And mingling flashings of an under flame

That laughed and sported upward on the breeze.
And thronging tents I saw on Pergamus,
And banded taskmasters and cowering slaves
And oxen booty-laden. And the sky
Was bright with joy: for had not Ilion fallen,
Ilion the proud and all her palaces
Of Idan marble, mirrors to the sun,
Her heroes slain, her daughters captive led
To serve the Argive lords that widowed them?
Therefore the gods rejoiced—the unenvious gods,
Merciful gods, just gods—and heaven was bright.
But I went sick at heart, with tearless eyes
Praying if I might blind myself with tears,
And I do think all things did pity me,
All save the Olympus-dwellers. Thus I came.

"Now therefore I will die. For I have wrought
Such wrong as none e'er did upon the earth.
Lo, in what thing he sinned he had no fault,
For Aphrodite gave him Tyndaris,
And who may spurn the giving of a god?
But, even an he would not, other gods,
Pallas and Here, forced him, in their wrath
With Aphrodite, Paris, Ilion.
For, had it not been so, no town had fallen
In one man's sin, one woman's loveliness,

But only by the gods implacable.
Therefore I slew him for no fault of his,
And for the woe thereof I cannot live.
And slaying him I slew a royal town,
That might have been a mistress to the world,
With the old king and many goodly men.
For lo, if he had lived, these had not died:
He would have sent the Spartan woman home,
And Priamus and Ilion would have stood.
Therefore I die; I cannot live to see
Ruins of hearth and temple, I cannot live
And think on all this life made desolate,
Paris and Ilion.
Wherefore, O earth,
And sea, and lake, and stream, and tree, and flower,
And æther, and the studded lights of heaven,
Farewell; and Ida, that didst give me birth
Malfortunate to me and Ilion,
Give me a speedy death, lest I should lie
Wounded for many hours and many days
Until my thoughts do drive me mad again.
And now farewell, my mother."

So she said,
And slowly mounted all the barren crags;
But when she reached the highest, that looked down

Upon a stream dashing far underneath
A mist of spray from off the broken rocks,
She stood in the fair moonlight for a time,
Then cried again, "Farewell, mother, farewell,"
And stepped upon the utmost ledge to plunge
Into the deadly cataract—but fell
Struck by a painless shaft invisible
Of pitying Artemis.
There dead she lay
In all the ivory fairness of her lims,
In the dim moonlight on the Idæan rock,
And Ida from her forests whispered back
A shuddering farewell.

* * * *

In Elysion
There lies a broad bright plain, and through it dance
Two rivers downward to a distant sea
Whereof green wavelets toss empurpled crests,
Changed into jasper by the setting sun.
And lo, away upon a tiny steep
A town of temples many and palaces,
And happy people and song-echoing streets.
This is called Ilion, and yonder hill
Pergamus. Here they dwell in holy calm

That suffered the fell envy of the gods,
With all the elder progeny of Tros.
Such meed have they, such separate recompense
Beyond the rest. Unvexed of Here, Pallas,
Hephæstus, Poseidaon, peacefully
They dwell—no Spartan plague-spot in their midst,
No warfare at their gates: no death, no pain,
No winter theirs, but life and happiness
Eternal as Elysion itself.

Yonder where Simois and Xanthus lap
Meads summery with never-dying blooms,
Lily and asphodel and amaranth,
Crocus and rose and snowflake, wander some.
Others attend where sits old Priamus
Glad-hearted in a many-raftered hall,
Making libation to ancestral Zeus.
And round him Hecabe with fifty sons—
Maidens, and wives, and heroes, counselors,
And chiefs of elden yore. And in the midst
A minstrel boy, that tunes upon a tung
More silvery than his cithern ancient tales
Of days before the fickle Tyndaris,
Before Laomedon and Heracles,
When faith and peace and holiness and right
Shone spotless in primæval demigods.

And near him listen two, or feign to listen,
As fair as in the happy shepherd days
Ere the high gods put madness in his mind
And called it love—he sitting at her feet,
She drawing through his locks caressant hands,
Like traveling fingers of a dawn, put forth
To thrust away the funeral garb of night.
But most they love the sunny mountain slopes
And shady glens, and ivied caves and scaurs,
And laughing streams and sweet memorial haunts,
Of old Elysian Ida. Such their life
As native earth to storm-dashed mariners
That many winds have driven and many waves
Tossed many a league back to their mother coast;
But skyless days and nights, and mists and storm,
Still blind them to the shore, until the waves
Glide into ripples, and the winds have fled,
And with them storm and mist, and from above
The sun bursts out and shows them stranded home:
And many dear ones clasp them round and bring
All life and gladness, and they bless the woes
That make their refuge sweeter than safe shores
And summer tides and softly breathing skies.

Save that one day, as yearly summers wing,
They visit earth—save that one day they know

The doom of one sad evening that the gods
Have doomed them yearly—Paris that endured
To leave Œnone, her that healed not Paris.
And oftentimes hath Idan forester
Or shepherd, threading slow his homeward way,
Stood awe-arrested as the moonbeams slid
Down through the sombre shades, impenetrable
Save when they shivered sideways from the wind.
Yea, he hath stood and seen a woeful form,
But fair as dawn upon the Idæan peaks,
Trailing adown the interwoven groves
As wounded—and away upon the hill,
Perfect as Aphrodite, but her face
Sick with a woe that killed the gazer's soul,
One that stretched forth a hand before her eyes,
Then fell back shrieking. And the breeze caught up
The wail, and bore it onward through the wood,
Until the very foliage shuddered more,
Rustling responsive pity. And then alone
The solemn rows of giant-girthèd pines
Frown in the blank death-silence of the night.

1867.

THE STORY OF COMATAS.

THE STORY OF COMATAS.

ARGUMENT.

A certain shepherd loved and worshiped the Muses exceedingly, for which his master thought to have slain him. Howbeit the goddesses wrought his deliverance in marvellous wise, and brought him to great felicity, but his master to a miserable end.

NEAR Zancle in the fair Trinacrian isle—
Now Sicily, but on an ancient while
Seafarers named it the Trinacrian shore—
Anigh to Zancle dwelt an herdsman poor
Yet richer far than many a lord this day.*

For to the Muses did Comatas pray,
Who of sweet sounds gave him such mastery

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* A reminiscence, I fancy, of Morris's line—

"And richer than the Emperor is to-day."

—*The Proud King.*

That when he sang men thought themselves to be
Where Siren voices o'er the hushed waves come,
And when he piped the nightingale was dumb.
Surely I deem a happy life he spent,
Whose mind unto no scorching cares was lent
Whereby the green leaf ere its time is sere
And the heart's springtide turns to winter drear.
For while his flock cropped short the heathery lea
He piped right cheerly to the tossing sea,
Or hymned the god that rules the glorious day—
Happy though no man heard his roundelay.
And, when the red sun neath the wave was gone,
And brighter in mid sky the pale moon shone,
Then truly were the roselipped maidens fain
To listen whiles he sang in wondrous strain
Of gods and heroes and the great old time
Before this earth had faded from her prime,
Or chanted praises of Idalia's queen.
Then would they scatter on the moonlit green,
And thread with shepherd lads a rustic maze
All to the dainty measure of his lays.

Ægon was of this shepherd named the lord,
Whose wide lands opened to the ocean-board
For many a league of fruitful pasturage,
Who many an hundred bondmen held in gage,

O'er whom he ruled more lordly than a king,
Deeming their lives to be a little thing,
And oft for some small fault a man would slay,
Naught caring what of him the world should say,
Nor having of the just gods any fear.

Now in the flowery season of the year,
And at the midmost of a cloudless day,
It fell perchance that Ægon passed that way
Nigh where Comatas used his flock to feed,
Who now was tuning to new notes his reed
Beneath the shadow of a beechen tree.
Thereunder whiles he played full daintily,
Beside him Ægon stood and said, "Sir Knave,
Prithee why echoeth this tune so brave?
Scare ye the wolf thus early from the fold?
Or seek ye perhaps to make the crow less bold
To pluck his harvest from the unshorn fleece?
Or wish ye to *mine* ears such little peace
That thus ye train your noisy reed and harsh
To mock the clamour of a bitterns' marsh?"
To whom Comatas answered reverently,
"Thereof, good master, prithee pardon me,
Who hearkened not thy footstep drawing nigh,
And of my feeble skill was fain to try
Some pleasant strain unto the maids divine

About whose brows the sented laurels twine:
Yea, often from my labour's scanty price
A yearling kid has fed their sacrifice,
Who give their slaves more than a kingdom's fee,
Envy of gods, sweet-breathing minstrelsy."
To whom said Ægon, "Nay, and dost thou so?
Then mayhap soon their kindness wilt thou know;"
And so upon his way passed scoffingly:
Whereon Comatas, used these moods to see,
Piped up, nor held his churlish lord in fear.

But when the sun was down and night grew near,
And he must lead his flocks unto the pen,
There stood his master and of serving men
Some score, to whom spake Ægon on such wise,
"Knaves, of this shepherd see that ye make prize:
Yet from your hands no harm to him shall tide,
But bring him to the place where I shall guide.
And if to any of you this word seem vain,
Or any to make little speed be fain,
I think before long while that man to slay."

No pleasant speech he spake to them; and they,
Who knew not to what thing his purpose bent,
But thought that a brief space of punishment
Comatas for some ill-done deed must taste,

To work their master's bidding made all haste,
Naught eager of his threat to make essay,
And led Comatas where he showed the way,
Till to an outland coppice they were come,
Whose taper trunks scarce hid a shattered dome.

Then, drawing near, they knew it for a place
Built of old time by one of Ægon's race,
And how that in it was a chest of stone,
Wherein he thought to rest, his life being done,
Yet came unto another grave at last—
As to himself a forest voice forecast,
Saying, " O man, upon some other spot
Rear up thy sepulchre and grieve me not,
And have long wealth of days felicitous.
But if thou hew this tree most dear to us,
And in its stead a burial chamber raise,
Think not to look on many happy days,
But in short time most miserably to die,
Nor even then within thy tomb to lie."
So spake to him the woodland god, but he,
That no god worshiped, smote adown the tree
And builded where the green sap ran this dome;
Which being fully wrought, unto his home
While with no careful mind his foot was bent,
Wolves of the mountain met him where he went,

Whom with short space for prayer or curse they slew
And to some trackless den his body drew:
Whereby in brief time, as the voice had said,
He came in a poor place to lay his head
Who, that thereto his rotting bones might come,
Despite the forest god raised up this tomb.

Thereto they wended through the thick-set brake,
And therein being entered Ægon spake,
Saying, "Good people, truly think I best
This second time ye doubt not of my hest,
But in the stone coffer this shepherd lay,
Except ye wish to see an evil day."
Such was the bidding that Comatas heard;
Who yet indeed had breathed not any word,
Deeming this thing to be but some grim play,
Nor willed his master's rigour to gainsay
—Knowing that Ægon used not to relent—
In any wise for some small punishment.
But, when that harsh speech fell upon his ear,
Then with it came an horrid nameless fear
Drowning Comatas in its mighty wave,
And pardon wildly he began to crave,
Albeit of no wrongful deed he knew:
Whom, hand and foot fast held, six slaves soon threw

Within the coffer, and closed down the lid
Till in its wards the grating lock had slid.

Then Ægon stood beside the chest, and said,
"Good friend, I marvel that thou hast such dread,
Being, as thou sayest, a god-fearing man;
For if thy life should be but as a span,
Or if thou come to fourscore years and ten,
This resteth with the gods, and not with men.
Wherefore I rede thee pray these gods to send
Long years of gladness and a peaceful end
In guerdon of thy kindly championship.
But, if from out their minds thy service slip,
And if on thee they look with small good will,
But send upon thee, as might hap, some ill,
Yet shalt thou thank from Hades me that gave
Thy luckless bones, unasked, an honoured grave."

Therewith began he from that place to wend,
In no wise doubting what should be the end;
And as he went some mocking tune he sang.
But, while his last word through the chamber rang,
Upon Comatas came a deadly swoon,
Wherein he lay for many a night and noon,
Dreamless and painless, till the birds awoke
One morning and Comatas' slumber broke;

That knew not first indeed if he were dead
Or live, nor in what place, but for great dread
Did close again his eyes, thinking to see
Through the thick darkness white Persephone,
Or lurid swirls of Pyriphlegethon,
Whereby the restless spirits make their moan.
But when he heard not any waters' wash
Against the gloomy boat, nor muffled plash
Of him that ferries o'er the Stygian marsh,
Nor furious scourges of taskmasters harsh,
Nor feeble twitterings of the phantom dead,
Then took Comatas courage with raised head
To look upon the darkness and to seek
What else might be, with trembling hands and weak.
So smote he on the clammy side, and (dim
And slow at first) all things came back to him—
Wishing indeed the Stygian stream were passed
He feared of late to look on.

But at last
Unto the sweet-voiced sisters changed his mind,
And to his bosom strayed his hand to find
The river-gotten reed whose liquid lays
Lightened the weariness of happier days.
Thereto Comatas turned, who thought not yet,
Albeit by them forgotten, to forget

The maids that dwell by babbling Hippocrene,
But framed a prelude on that reedpipe lean,
Whereof the wondrous skill I fain would show,
Likening it to some fair tune men know,
If in these times were heard a tune so fair;
But now there breathes not such a sweetness rare
On us that love the Muses not so well.
Only the manner would I gladly tell,
The few and feeble echoings in mine ears,
Of that sweet lay, lost in long lapse of years,
The which, while yet his pipe was scarcely stilled,
In that drear place melodiously he trilled:—

"Maybe that now the sad night flies
The pleasant sun; the boughs proclaim
In early-waking harmonies
The faint east quickening into flame;*
Light whispers stir the sented grass;
A sheepbell tinkles o'er the lea;
Far off the dull gray vessels pass
Along the cold gray line of sea.

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* "The faint east quickens."—SWINBURNE, *Atalanta in Calydon.*

"Maybe this hour the eye of day
Glares lidless on the pastured down,
And thick-clad flocks have made their way
Beneath the shade of beeches brown
Where lies their shepherd stretched along;
Upon his ear fall pleasantly
The bee's soft hum, cicala's song,
And measured murmuring of the sea.

"Or on the rosy breast of eve
Perchance this while the sun-god lies
Sunk into rest; the red fields heave,
Moved by the west wind's loving sighs;
Hushed are the woodland voices quite,
And hushed the music of the bee;
Still roll from far in long 'good-night'
The echoes of the tireless sea.

"I hear them not, I see them not,
Where noiseless gloom encircles me,
Almost forgetting, quite forgot.
Only a form I seem to see,
Only a voice I seem to hear,
Of one whose heavy-lidded eyes
Drain slowly out a burning tear,

Who veils her red-white face and cries,
'Why comes he not this many a day?
What bated breath hath done me wrong?
What bitter god hath cut away
The love whereto my love had clung?'

"Ah! ye the flower-crowned goddesses
That dwell in endless undreamt bliss;
Whose sunlit palaces of gold
The blue slopes of Olympus hold;
Or if by Castaly's green pool,
Beneath o'er-arching shadows cool,
Ye quaff the summer day's delight;
Or if your slender lims and white
Ye moisten in Libethra's spring,
Or in Pimplea, listening
While the sweet-throated nightingale
Tells once again her tearful tale—
A little think on me, I pray,*
Who hope not many another lay
Unto the mighty gods to sing,
But in short time must look the wing

---

* "Remember me a little, then, I pray."—MORRIS, preface to *The Earthly Paradise.*

Of Hades' messenger to hear
Flapping about this place of fear."

So had his song ceased, and he seemed to know
Without that prison-place such murmuring low
As when upon the soft hillside he lay
Where beechen leaves shut out the noontide day,
Passing to dreamland, listening the sound
Of tiny honey-gatherers flocking round
Some bush of dainty-flowered aspalathus.
Such gentle din, that now more clamorous
And nearer grew, Comatas wondering heard,
Until beside him soon a small thing whirred,
And soon another. Then he turned, and lo!
At the chest's corner saw the white light show
Where time and little care had made a chink.
Then in good sooth began his heart to sink,
Who saw the sharp-tunged insects hurrying through,
And thought indeed that by this torment new
His master, grudging further space of breath,
Sent him a yet more miserable death.
But now the myriad fluttering settled down
Where seemed that dark place meetest for a town
And palace of sweet-chambered honeycomb:
Where how they made of wax a tiny home
That soon grew large I linger not to tell,

Nor yet how many hopes and fears befell
Comatas ere with trembling hand he drew
Unharmed the luscious banquetage, and knew
That the good gods remembered him and sent
Such heavenly stay to hinder famishment.
So from that moment held he a firm heart,
Nor thought from happier hours to be apart
Long time, but, as release were nowise dim,
To the sweet sisters ceased he not to hymn,
And all the high gods, grateful chants of praise,
And fashion on his reedpipe wondrous lays,
To tune in afterwhile.

But at the last
Came Ægon, when a year was fully passed,
Having of cowering slaves a goodly throng,
And of the closed door drew the leathern thong,
And, being entered, to his bondmen spake:
"Friends, to the high gods holy reverence make;
For this Comatas, as ye doubtless heard,
Above all other lords the Olympians feared,
And to the Muses most of these would pay
Much savoury due of sacrifice, and play
Sweet-sounding hymns, whereof I bid you see
How the nine sisters gave him goodly fee."

Therewith he strode a pace unto the chest,
And, plucking forth a key from out his breast,
The rusty fastenings of the lock undid,
And bade his bondmen raise the heavy lid
—A rough-hewn slab not one man's strength coud lift;
Who to perform his bidding scarce made shift,
Such chilly fearfulness their hot veins froze.

But when the lid was raised Comatas rose,
And upright in the chest they saw him stand
Holding the oftheard reedpipe in his hand,
In no wise like one wakened from the dead,
Save for some pallor, and about his head
What seemed to be a dusky halo wound,
Wherefrom there came a strangely murmuring sound.
Then wist I all were gladdened in that place—
All saving Ægon, that stood face to face
With one he thought to be no living man,
But from the shades indeed a spectre wan
The serpent-haired Erinyes had sent
To work on him some fearful punishment.
So, when the shepherd's lips unclosed to speak,
Then backward Ægon fell with a great shriek,
And lay with glazed eyes bloodless on the ground ;
Whom when some faithful servants gathered round,

Lo! the dusk halo o'er Comatas' head
Louder and scattered grew, until there spread
Throughout the tomb of bees a stormy cloud,
Driving before them all the panic crowd;
Who willed not in that place to stand again
That day, naught caring if their lord were slain,
Or rather gladder. But with many a tear
Of joyance would they bid Comatas cheer,
And heard with leaping hearts his wondrous tale
Told o'er and o'er, until the sunlight pale
Passed into moonlight, and in festive throng
They bore him, crowned with flowers, and
praised in song,
And cheered with ruddy vintage, to his home.

But, when the golden-footed dawn was come,
Then to that gloomy threshold back they went,
And found their master's guilty life long spent,
Whereof those small brown things had left alone
A ghastly spectacle of fleshless bone.

So prospered this man for an evil deed.
But to Comatas soothly came much meed
Of wealth and gladness, and an envied name.
For in brief space some god had sent the fame

Of what had been among all men that bide
Betwixt the narrow waters and the wide;
And to Comatas did the people bring,
As each coud furnish of his store, some thing
Of price—a kid, or honey-apples ripe,
Fine-woven raiment, or a sweet-tuned pipe
Whereof the playing was more worth than gold,
Cups carven by some cunning man of old
With many a living wonder changed to wood—
As beyond others in the god's sight good
Each to this shepherd gave some pleasant gift:
Who, out of toilsome livelihood and thrift
Being of no glad thing for the rest denied,
Sang to his flocks below the cool hillside
For many a happy summer, and being dead
In fair Sicilian marble laid his head,
Whereon was graven all the tale here told.
And many a long year did that iland hold
His name in honour, and his songs were sung
Many a long season when the world was young.

But as the world grows old all memory dies,
And so no more beneath the southern skies
Comatas' name is storied in men's praise
(Though mayhap still the shepherds pipe his lays

Unwitting), and no more his tomb is shown—
Lost in some untrod hill-nook, overgrown
With evil weeds, or broke with wrack of time.
Only an ancient singer's scarce-saved rime*
The scanty word hath breathed wherefrom to tell
This tale of him that loved the Muses well.

1868.

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* Theocritus, *Idyll*, vii., 78-85.

AN OLD, OLD STORY.

I.

ON AN UNCOLOURED PHOTOGRAPH.*

VIEWING thy sweet similitude, portrayed
By heaven's own limner, the unerring sun,
Rudely I did the artist's fault upbraid,
That left his lovely labour half undone;
Whose niggard sloth of my poor wit to mend,
And to his picture give thy natural hues, [wend,
Straightway I bade three courier thoughts forth
And for my pencil purest colours choose.
Then one, returning, for thy cheek's soft blush
Brought vermeil of the winter-blooming rose;
And one, to paint thy neck, the last faint flush
Of dying day upon the winter snows;
The third had borrowed from the dawning sky
The liquid heaven of thy dark-curtained eye.

Jan., 1873.

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* This and the only other sonnet in the volume were written while reading Shakspere's Sonnets, the simple measure of which I have preferred, endeavouring also in the present poem to catch something of their spirit.

II.

THE FIRST VALENTINE.

Go, Valentine, go! By valley and hill,
By field and woodland, and sand and sea,
By lake and pool, and river and rill,
Love's wings are loose and his words are free.
Shall we not speak? shall our voice be dumb,
When Love hath speech in cottage and hall?
Shall our voice be dumb and our heart be numb
That love the best and truest of all?

Go, Valentine, go! She will gaze upon others—
On others less loving—ere glancing at thee:
A smile and a kiss she will give to thy brothers,
A smile and a mock to my message and me.
Yet hope bides long, and patience longer,
And the love I love the longest of three;
And these are strong, and my love is stronger,
So thou shalt say what I say to thee.

Say, when my skiff, down the swift current dashing,
Cleaves waters that mirror the light of the skies,

In the moon-silvered wavelets her laughter seems
flashing,
Her smile in the diamond spraydrops that rise.
Her beauty in all that is fair I remember; [eyes;
In the heaven of the dawn the clear heaven of her
And the flush on her cheek in the last crimson ember
That flushes the face of the day as it dies.

Say, when the first bird of morning is singing,
Praying for her ever brings me delight;
Praying for her, ere slumber be bringing
Her presence to gladden the visions of night;
Thinking of her every eve and each morrow,
In solitude thinking, or midmost the stir
Of the city of nations—oh! balm of my sorrow,
Oh! crown of my happiness—thinking of her.

Yet what shall it profit, though thus thou be laded?
Were the bloom of her beauty less perfect to see,
Were the sun of her grace and her pureness o'er-shaded,
So might her heart beat less coldly for me.
Ah! if a tung of laudation coud sing of me,
Tell of some nobleness, blazon me great!
If the world with its voices and echoes coud ring of me!
So might I bear to be patient and wait.

Yet say that all greatness and goodness rise slowly,
That the oak of the forest was once but a seed;
Can she tell the first spring of the high or the lowly,
The birth of the flower from the birth of the weed?
The river was once but a fountain, that plashes
The navies of nations with fathomless waves;
And the gold that now glitters, the gem that now flashes,
Have once been o'ertrod by the footstep of slaves.

Then fly to her, Valentine! Valentine, fly to her!
Fear not the scorn of a spirit so sweet:
And cry to her, Valentine, tenderly cry to her,
Laying thy burden of love at her feet.
So, if the years ever crown me with honour,
In the day that shall come she may pity me yet;
So haply till then, while my hope fastens on her,
She may sometimes remember, not always forget,

1873.

III.

THE SECOND VALENTINE.

O LONG-EXPECTED! art thou here once more,
  Herald of happy spring, and Love's own day?
Is it thy voice I hear without my door,
  Bidding me tell what I would have thee say
  When to my heart's hope thou hast found thy way,
Whom, new-awaken, thou dost haste to greet
With wooing speeches and love-tokens meet?

Ah! surely now thou comest but in vain,
  Since vainly didst thou come a year agone:
Why wilt thou wake my foolish song again?
  Knowing that I no art of Orpheus own,
  To outcharm a Siren or to move a stone—
I, a poor rimer of these later days,
Whose strong heart beats not in my feeble lays.

Oh! did I dream, or did I twice begin
  Some dawning change in her calm eyes to see?

Alas! for she has "turned about to win
Once more an unblest woeful victory,"*
And I—no heavenly hand has given to me
Such threefold charm wherewith Milanion stayed
The windshod feet of Arcady's fair maid.

Yet natheless this third time will I cast
My heart's love at her feet, while yet I may,
If haply it will please her at the last
From her ungentleness awhile to stay,
Gather the fair fruit lying in her way,
Grasp the sweet toy whose charm shall never tire,
And gain the bliss "all women most desire."†

Yes, haste, O kindly day, and tell her this,
And with the first breath of returning spring
Softly do thou her cheek's faint flushes kiss

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* Morris, *Atalanta's Race.*

† In Gower's Tale of Florent (*Confessio Amantis*, bk. i.) the hero has to discover "what alle women most desire." The answer is—

"That alle women lievest wolde
Be soverein of mannes love."

The same legend is the subject of Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale."

And therewith to her thought the memory bring
Of shadowy elm and rosebush blossoming,
And ask her then what new felicity
She wins from these brief days so changed to me.

Maybe that they are changed some fault was mine
Of unripe hope and overloving word.
Oh! tell her that forgiveness is divine:
Have I, whose love was great, so greatly erred
That even thy pleading voice must be unheard,
Her eyes unmoved for aught that I can say,
And all my life as this sad winter's day?

1874.

IV.

TWO PROVERBS.

WE sat and watched the flickering daylight die,
From underneath the rose-festooned verandah,
And fell to talk of proverbs, she and I,
I and 'Fanchette' (*mutata sunt mutanda*).

"Yes, they are strangely wise," I said, "and yet
'Twixt two there seems a wondrous inconsistence:
D'you think that hearts grow more akin, Fanchette,
In 'inverse ratio to their square of distance'?"

She was not mathematically inclined,
She said; indeed, my meaning was beyond her.
"Well then, is 'out of sight' *quite* 'out of mind,'
Or think you 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'?

"Both can't be true. I doubt but you'll forget
One absent friend at latest ere December."
"Our country life is quiet," said Fanchette,
"I have not much to do save to remember.

"But you, who mingle with the busy throng,
You"—thereupon I stopped her in the middle.
"Fanchette," I said, "Time answers nothing wrong,
So let us wait for Time to rede our riddle."

Brief while to wait—the leaves were scarcely thin,
Summer's last rose was scarcely yet a-dying,
When Time his weird solution handed in,
Affirming both, yet each apart denying.

For I no limits to my love assigned,
But hers within her eyes' patrol must wander:
She found that 'out of sight is out of mind,'
And I that 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.'

Ay, there's the pity. Evil proverbs both!
If either were more false or either truer,
A little lief had not been turned to loth,*
And weary hearts had been by one heart fewer.

1874.

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* Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, bk. i. :—

"Wherof the lief is after lothe."

V.

RONDEL.

"I LOVE you, and I love you not," she said,
And brought me to a little garden-close; *
"I will not bid your hope be holely dead,"
And in my hand she set an opening rose.

It was the emblem of her double mind
("I love you, and I love you not," she said),
A fair, faint-perfumed blossom, and behind
A small sharp thorn raised up its threatening head.

Beneath the screen of petals overspread
It lurked unseen, unfelt—alas, unsought;
"I love you, and I love you not," she said,
And sweet "I love you" hid sharp "love you not."

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* The *expression* is suggested by the exquisite song in Morris's *Jason*, bk. iv., beginning :—

"I know a little garden-close,
Set thick with lily and red rose."

But now my poor frail flower is crushed and torn,
Its blush is faded, and its perfume fled;
The thorn remains—long since I found the thorn;
"I love you,"—ah! "I love you not," she said.

1874.

VI.

"CONFESSIO AMANTIS."*

"CONFESSIO AMANTIS?" Oh,
You need not open that; I know
Your sober wisdom spurns the storied fancies
Of long ago.

So put it back upon the shelf,
And see this curious piece of delf
I got for a mere song the other morning.
—Well, please yourself.

Ah! have the roses caught your eye?
And must you hear the reason why
I put these faded flowers between the pages
So carefully by?

---

* The title of the poet Gower's English masterpiece, always quaint, and often beautiful, but hitherto painfully neglected and scandalously edited.

The metre of this poem and of "Helicè" is adapted (by the excision of one foot in the first, second, and fourth lines) from one invented by Mr. Grant Allen, the author of many poems (unfortunately not yet published) of remarkable beauty.

You know my foolish childish bent.
You know these poor, dead things are meant
To echo to my thought their simple language
Of hue and sent.

But what I meant them to express,
That is my secret, friend—unless——
Well, in three times I think you'll hardly guess it;
Thrice you shall guess.

"Emblems of one dear maid?" Oh no!
Surely you wrong her fairness so.
How should this withered growth of leaf and blossom
Her beauty show?

Oh no! guess on. "Are these the sign
Of my dead love?"—No love of mine:
Although I grant your metaphoric instinct
Has grown more fine.

My love no August drought coud kill,
Nor frosts of February chill:
Truly I know it is not dead, nor faded,
But blossoms still.

Deep in my heart its roots are spread,
With my life-blood its life is fed,
Fanned with the breath I breathe, and if this wither
I too am dead.

You aim but widely at the best:
Guess once again. Ah! you have guessed,
And to your curious wit my poor sad secret
Lies manifest.

She gave me those one night of June,
And these she gave that last sweet noon,
Tokens of hope restored and love half-willing
To follow soon.

Ah! friend, what further need be said?
The hope's recalled, the love is fled;
The flowers remain, fit emblems of both faded,
Both crushed, both dead—

Embalmed within the sweet sad rime
Writ by that lover of old time
Whose lesser star still sparkled through the sunlight
Of Chaucer's prime.

He knew the better and the worse
In love, its blessing and its curse;
But still, "I must her loven" is the burden
Of all his verse.

And I—however, of myself
Enough. Let's put them on the shelf—
John Gower's 'Confessio' and *my* confession—
And see the delf.

1874.

VII.

WHAT ARE THE WILD WAVES SAYING?

BETWEEN the waters' ebb and flow
I listened to their plashings low:
"O waters of the western sea,
What song is this ye sing to me?"

The last wave of the ebbing tide
Crept to my feet and thus replied:
"My waters as they backward roll
Sound the sad echo to thy soul.

"A shriveled line of weedy wrack
Speaks to thine eye my morning's track:
A few dead flowers are left to show
Where rose thy hopes a year ago.

"Thy hopes ran high, thy hopes ran free;
My waters surged in boisterous glee.
But now their bed is dull and drear,
And thy heart waste since yesteryear."

"O waters of the western sea,
Sad is the song ye sing to me.
O waters of the ebb and flow,
Is there none other song ye know?"

The first wave of the flowing tide
Crept to my feet and thus replied:
"My waters as they onward roll
Give the glad keynote to thy soul.

"A little while and on the shore
They'll rise to where they rose before:
A little while and thy heart's cheer
Shall dance as high as yesteryear."

Where Ystwith's waters join the sea
Thus spake the meeting tides to me,
And here within this southern bay
I listen to their voice to-day.

I hear the self-same songs again;
The ebb-tide's song is true as then,
But still with weary heart I bide
The promise of the flowing tide.

Ah! if the currents in our life
Veered equal, as in watery strife!
But man's poor hopes, 'twixt high and low,
Take hours to ebb, but years to flow.

Aberystwith, 1874.
Shanklin, 1874.

VIII.

THE LAST VALENTINE.

No sented offering of floral rime
To sue thy maiden heart this year I bring,
Nor would I vex thy peace this one last time
With vain appeal or bootless murmuring.
Only my love, whose doom thou late didst seal,
With dying breath a message bade me send,
'Praying that from his woe might spring thy weal,
And his poor loss to thy dear vantage tend;
Trusting that thou hadst found a stronger guide,
A wiser counsellor, a love more true'——
But there with eyes that flashed a quenchless pride
He turned and bade me write those last words through:
'For, let her search the bounds of earth and sky,
She shall not find a truer love than I.'

1875.

IX.

AN APOLOGY.

IF any westward breeze should blow
  These faintly-sented flowers of song
To cliffs that rise o'er waves that flow
To meet the Severn and the sea—
Sweet servitress of harmony,
  Deem not my rime hath done thee wrong.

I chide thee not, I blame thee not:
  How should I blame, how should I chide,
How think of thee one bitter thought?
Nay, if the power be mine to bless,
May thy new-budded happiness
  Bear richest fruit, O happy bride.

But think it not amiss if I
  In my heart's solitude am fain
To wander back to days gone by—
As one who waking in the night
Turns from the cold gray dawning light
  To dream his last sweet dream again.

1875.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE AIR SPIRIT.*

WHO would be a Spirit of Air,
Wafted along in the boundless sky,
Sweeping away in a whirlwind flight,
Or soft as a summer sigh?

I would be a Spirit of Air;
On a Zephyr's wings I'd merrily sit,
And over the plain
With its golden grain,
And over the snow-capped hills I'd flit.
In the tops of the forest trees I'd hide,
Till the Spirits of Air
Should find me there
On the leafiest branch astride.
And out of my bower, when they found me, I'd fly
Laughing a mocking laugh in my pride;

---

* Suggested to "the boy that was then" by Tennyson's *Mermaid.*

And they should chase me abroad and away,
Abroad and away in the merry blue sky;
They should chase me over the torrent's spray,
And among the rocks where the seabirds bide,
Preening their wings in the summer day;
Over the blue abyss—
Over the wavelets, one by one,
Tossing their heads,
Leaping to kiss
Our feet as we passed,
With a twinkling laugh in the sun.
Till the mermaidens came, with their locks flung free
In a diamond sheen, in a golden blaze,
From hunting the countless things of the sea,
To gaze at our flight with a longing gaze.
And on a purple cloud we'd rest,
A purple cloud from the dusky west,
Till the stars came forth in a silver maze;
Then would we rise,
Neath the myriad lamps of the spangled skies,
Dancing away
In a banded throng,
To the grim-voiced deep
Chanting a song;
Dancing away
To hail the sun as he rose from his sleep.

No wintry chill should be ours:
We would follow
The swallow,
And follow the flowers.
Our food should be the jasmine's sent,
Our drink the dew on the rose besprent.
The Sylph might boast of a leafy home,
The River Nymph tell of the silver foam,
The Mermaid sing of a deeper wave,
A gem-strewn sand and a coral cave—
Living in joy, living in love,
We'd change not for billow or torrent or grove.

1866.

PHILOMMEIDES.*

SOME have I known of soul as true and tender,
Features as winsome and a heart as free;
But never saw I yet in other maiden
Like fairy glee—

Glee like the summer waters that, illumined
By the full splendour of the noontide ray,
In one unceasing tide of rippling laughter
Welcome the day.

There is a tale, a simple ancient story,
Told at the humblest and the highest board,
Where'er in first calm infant slumber sleepeth
Peasant or lord—

That, often as within the peaceful cradle
Soft dreamland smiles upon its features rest,
By angel hands the child is girt, by angel
Voices addressed.

---

* Written to Miss E. H. Boys, now Mrs. Lyne.

But when first sins affix their blot, and darker
The stain becometh daily and more wide,
Then, one by one, the sorrowing seraphs slowly
Forsake its side.

Yet sure the loving spirits longer tarried
By one too pure to be forsaken thus,
And still some angel monitor accosts thee,
Unheard by us.

Or, haply, in thy early spring some seraph
Bent o'er thy cot, embracing thee the while,
And still there lingers, on those lips imprinted,
The angel's smile.

Smile on, laugh on, in all thy youth and fairness;
Laugh on, smile on, and gladden still the glad,
Rejoice the drooping spirit, make the mourner's
Sadness less sad.

So, sorrow banishing from all around thee,
Thou shalt have love of others for thy meed,
And He who dwells above shall smile upon thee
In all thy need.

Till in thy latest hour thou shalt look backward
With trustful smile upon thy lifetime past,
And to a joy eternal angels smiling
Bear thee at last.

1867.

FLORES—AMORES.

"YES, thy wave was calm and golden, golden with the sinking day,
Scarce a zephyr shook thy willows, shook thy poplars tall and gray.
She had plucked a spray of woodbine, roses red that near it grew,
Added from thy bank, O streamlet, many a tiny flower of blue.
Flowers and hand in mine I clasped them; looking in her face I said,
'Emblems these of love and fairness, rose and woodbine, white and red;
Tokens of remembrance constant these the tiny blossoms blue,
Leave them here with rose and woodbine, if you love me well and true.
If to you I seem too tainted, you that are without a blot,
If I am too poor and humble, keep them—if you love me not.'

And her eyes turned slowly upward, as I strove to read her mind,
Slowly dropped her hand unlinken, but the flowers remained behind.

"Now thy stream is dull and troubled, gilded by no sun thy vale,
Bend thy willows, bow thy poplars, neath the storm-gusts of the gale.
On thy banks again I wander, but she walks not at my side;
Once again I clasp the blossoms—'tis to fling them to thy tide.
But a few short weeks I left her, and again she plays her part,
And another bows before her, lord of what he thinks a heart.

"Lo the blossoms that she gave me; like the love she took they died,
Gathered for a moment's plaything, then to wither cast aside.
Take them, streamlet, as she gave them, with the cord she drew around:
Let them perish, thread and blossom, in thy whirling eddies drowned.

Yet beyond the beechen hillside on thy bosom let them lie;
Wandering with her happier wooer she may see them floating by:
So perchance some thought of sorrow may redeem the thing she is,
So when I am gone for ever may a truer love be his.
Then, O streamlet, roll them onward, roll them onward to the sea;
Let no eastern blast return them, poison-blossoms unto me."

Then he raised his hand to cast them, mingling with the mournful wind
Heard a sob, and turning saw her, her his faithful love, behind.
In her fair blue eyes the teardrops glistened as she raised her head,
In her hand the same sweet emblems, rose and woodbine, white and red—
Emblems they of maiden's fairness, emblems of affection true—
Tokens of remembrance constant, with them lay the flowers of blue.

" *You* had passed," she said, "the hill-side, passed the house without a look;
I with these my heart's first pledges came to meet you at the brook.
Look upon my face, then tell me, looking on the skies above,
If you think a mocking whisper truer than a woman's love.
If you think *me* false, then fling them in the tide, a paltry sham:
They may bring, you said, some sorrow to redeem the thing I am.
If you think me true——"

That autumn, ere the summer flowers had died,
Stood beneath yon steeple peering from the beech hill's russet side
One that, blent with bloom of orange, wore enwreathed around her head
Blue forget-me-nots, and with them rose and woodbine, white and red.

1867.

LYCIDAS.

In memory of E. L. Bernays, New College, Oxford, Editor of "College Rhymes," drowned August 31st, 1870, while bathing in an estuary of the Bay of Bantry.

AND shall not one brief page be writ,
Not one poor stanza, in his praise,
Whose various ear and tutored wit
Once judged our humble lays—

Himself from out the riming throng
Conspicuous in the power divine
To softly tune the graceful song
Or urge the vigorous line?

Though not to me be given to frame
Sweet hymnings of memorial verse,
I, if none other, to his name
One little lay rehearse.

Yet, though his old familiar foot
We miss, he is not holely fled;
And, though his kindly voice is mute,
He is not holely dead.

But still its subtle fragrance gives
In death the summer's short-lived rose;
And still with us his record lives,
His memory sweetly blows.

And, though I strike with little art
These hasty notes on jarring strings,
To Nature's touch in many a heart
Their untaught burden rings.

1870.

*Λυκίδας.**

ΝΕΙΚΕΟΜΕΣ *ποταμὸν τὸν ἀμείλιχον ὃς κατέδυσε*
πασίφιλον πικροῖς † κύμασιν ἠίθεον·
δόξασκεν ποταμὸς δ' ἄρ' ἀναιδὴς ἄντιον ἄμμιν
ἀπύειν, ἀδινᾷ φρικὶ κυλινδόμενος,
"ὦ ξένε, μή μ' ἄγαν ὧδε καθάπτεο κερτομίοισι
ζωὰν ὃς Λυκίδᾳ δῶκα καὶ οὐ θανάτον·
τῷ θανάτωσα δὲμας, ψυχὰν δέ οἱ οὐ θανάτωσα,
ἦκα δὲ πὰρ ποταμοῖς ναίεμεν Ἠλυσίοις·
τῶν λοῦται Λυκίδας, πίνει δὲ φερέσβιον ὕδωρ
ἀντιλαβὼν ὁλοῷ πώματος ἀμβρόσια."

---

* "Thus sang the uncouth swain . . . warbling his *Doric* lay."
MILTON, *Lycidas.*

† Salt.

1870.

HELICÈ.

TO-NIGHT beneath the winter sky
I stood with none but Love anigh;
I stood, sweet heart, and strove a task to master
Love bade me try.

The circling firmament bedight
With all the pure-eyed gems of night
I scanned to find thy radiant virgin emblem,
My life's dear light.

A planet in the silver west
Threw forth a splendour manifest
From out the lucent throng, and seemed to bid me
There end my quest.

"Not thee, sweet visitant," I said,
"Though with a tenfold brilliance fed
From thy heaven's viewless empyrean altar,
My choice shall wed.

"Not common thus to glancing eyes
The lustre in my love that lies:
He that would know her full serene effulgence
Heavenward must rise.

"Thou unto other climes wilt flee,
Faithless, for others' gaze, but she,
For ever constant, radiance never changing
Sheds down on me."

So to those steadfast spheres my sight
Turned, that, more distant, lend the night
A glory seeming but from earth the fainter—
In heaven more bright.

There saw I that fair northern star*
Which first through all the angry war
Of winds and waves brought safe the old Phœnician
To lands afar.

Then cared no more my straining gaze
To wander through the argent maze,
But with an instant certainty I mirrored
Thee in those rays;

---

* Called by the Greeks "Helicè."

Who with thy own pure beacon-light
Ever through trouble's darksome night
Of driving storm and drifting current keepest
My course aright.

To-night, beneath the winter sky,
I won this quest Love made me try
Of thee, sweet heart, the Love that cannot perish,
Though Time may die.

1870.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

I.

THY race
Is nearly ended, and yet all too slow
For us thou travelest, we'd have thee go
With faster pace.

Dost hear
The clanging bells thy lingering footsteps flout?
"Die out, Old Year," they cry; "Old Year, die out;
Dost hear, Old Year?

And we—
We bid thee learn the lesson that they chime:
Die out, Old Year, give place to a new time;
We are weary of thee.

For thought
Grows sick in us, and our life's hope decays,
Counting the sinning and the sorrowing days
That thou hast brought.

We trod
With darkening sight more near to death each day,
And still we traveled in the smooth broad way
That leads *from* God.

Then hence
And to the wilderness of vanished years,
Laden with all our follies, crimes, and tears,
Bear thine offense.

II.

And yet,
Old Year, thou hast such little while to live,
Fain would we rather struggle to forgive,
Strive to forget.

Thee dying
Let us not curse, nor ill bespeak thee dead;
Nay, in Time's bosom let thy snowy head
Unvexed be lying.

Nor thus
Uncurst unblest alike shalt thou forth speed.
Not so, Old Year, if ever one good deed
Thou didst to us.

Didst bring
Not one small gift to make our pained eyes glad,
And our sad souls a little while less sad?
Ah! yes, the Spring.

The Spring!
Then fresh and fair the worn earth grew, and then
Life seemed once more to winterweary men
A pleasant thing.

Then Summer,
Thy sweet musician, to each feathered throat
Taught strains of mirthful melody that smote
Our sorrows number.

Gold-clad
Came Autumn next, and in his hand for toil
The bounteous wages, corn and wine and oil,
Making men glad.

And, though
All these are vanished and their beauty past,
And Winter over all his cloak hath cast
Of frost and snow,

Such rest
The labouring earth had need of—yea, and we,
Lest with an ever-sweet recurrency
We grew oppressed.

—Didst give us
All these good gifts, that we have turned to worse,
And for thy blessings hast thou had our curse?
Old Year, forgive us.

Our eyes
Are opened now; forgive, and die content
That this last moment of thy life now spent
Hath made us wise.

Oh knell
A tender requiem to his dying ear,
Ringing "Old Year, farewell. Farewell, Old Year.
Old Year, farewell."

1870-7.

TO A FLIRT.

ON HER RECOVERY FROM A DANGEROUS ILLNESS

O DID ye ken my ain dear?
'Twill gi'e ye mickle dool to hear
A chiel's been wooin' made me fear
I'd lose for aye my ain dear.

As she cam by frae Windsor toun,
Auld Death was gangin' on his roun',
An' cast his ee, the menseless* loun,
Asklent upo' my ain dear.

Her trippin' step! her winsome grace!
Her rosy, sonsie,† dimpled face!
It gart‡ his cauld banes throb apace
To gaze upo' my ain dear.

Like fa's lit by the gowden sun,
The gowden tresses, a' undone,
Wimplin' about her neck did run—
The saft neck o' my ain dear.

---

* Mannerless. † Sweet. ‡ Made.

An' then her een, 'twixt gray an' blue,
Wi' merry glintin's shot him thro';
He swoor an aith he never knew
A bonnier than my ain dear.

Tho' o' young hizzies doun below
Th' auld Mormon had a guidly show,
He thought he wad have ae* mair jo
Whan first he spied my ain dear.

But marriage is an awfu' thing,
Whilk even Death had found coud bring,
Wi' little hinney, mickle sting
—Ah, that 'twas saved my ain dear.

For Death wad be mair close acquent,
To look before the loup he tent;†
Sae back frae Windsor toun he went,
Unken'd, beside my ain dear.

He stept into her father's ha',
Made bauld to stap ae day or twa,
Then (Gude be thankit!) ran awa,
And never took my ain dear.

---

* One more mate. † Took care.

For soon he cam to understand
What ithers to their sorrow fand *—
There does na dwell in a' the land
Sic jillet† as my ain dear.

Already he'd some wee bit wifies,
Frae wham he'd learnt what married life is
Whare jealousy, fou' bogle,‡ rife is—
Sae he gi'ed owre my ain dear.

He'd tribble sair to keep his leddies
Frae flirtin' wi' the gay young shadies;
She wad ha'e dri'en him crazed frae Hades—
He *maun* gi'e owre my ain dear.

Sae Death is gaen this mony a day,
An' sooth there's mair than ane do say
That *I* ha'e little sense to stay:
What says to that my ain dear?

But, gin I've no the wit to flee,
Sall I be ane o' thretty-three?
Maun thretty-twa gae shares wi' me?
What says to that my ain dear?

---

* Found. † Such a jilt. ‡ Goblin.

She has na said a word at a';
Nae soun frae out her lips did fa';
Yet frae her mou' I've ta'en awa
The answer o' my ain dear.

Ah weel! my flight's na yet begun;
Till brent, the fire I winna shun;
What's na yet lost may yet be won—
The heart's-lo'e o' my ain dear.

1872.

AFTER PARTING.

AND so the last, last kiss is taken,
  And so the last, last word is said;
A kiss for Love that shall not waken,
  A prayer for Love that's newly dead.
No sweet sad dream of yesterday
  Rise up before his sleep-bound eye;
Be wraiths of memory far away
  From where our buried Love doth lie.

Ah! *does* he sleep? Does not one ember
  Of his strong life-fires flicker yet?
Have we, who promised to remember,
  Promised more surely to forget?
Can aught that shall be quite eclipse
  That which has been? O sweet, can I
Hearken that name upon men's lips
  With never a care and never a sigh?

Will my sad shadow holely vanish
  In your new life's serenest day?

One memory can *you* holely banish ?
  One rising vision holely lay ?
When long years fail, and when you hold
  Sweet children's children on your knee,
And silver are your locks of gold,
  Will you not yet remember me ?

If, wandering through some happy haven
  Where rest from life's rude seas the dead,
You mark perchance the letters graven
  That point where I have laid my head—
Yes, then of days long, long past by
  One little word the tale shall tell—
One prayer, soft struggling with a sigh,
  " Heaven rest his soul—he loved me well."

1872.

ON THE DEATH OF AN AERONAUT BY THE FALL OF HIS BALLOON.

LIKE some keen hawk, with forces yet unspent,
That stoops awhile to climb the steeper skies,
He for a moment fell, the next to rise
And make his last and loftiest ascent.

1873.

"FOUND DROWNED."

TWO nights ago, waiting at Lambeth Pier,
I saw a floating body, hailed a boat,
And helped the rowers tow it in to shore.
"Poor gentleman," we said, for gentleman
Was stamped by his own nature in his face,
And death coud only fix it firmer. Then
We looked to find his name and some address,
And searching found an open envelope
Directed *Francis Ellaby, Esq.,*
Brick Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, London. Inside
We found another envelope, addressed
Miss Florence Armfield, Oaklands, Hinton, Notts.
The seal was still unbroken, and outside
Returned—unopened in a woman's hand:
We opened it, and read this little note:—

My Darling Florence,
Do for mercy's sake
Send me one line and let me know the worst.
I have not heard from you for many weeks;

I hope you are not ill, but almost hope
You have been, in my fear of something worse.
Your faithful lover,

Francis Ellaby.

Elsewhere we found a photograph—her name
At foot of it, with three Italian words,
"Stella di me"—'his guiding star.'
One hand
Clutched tight his watch-chain; loosing it we found
A double locket, with her face again,
And treasured at its back a tiny curl
Of dark brown hair.
This was her answer then,
Returned—unopened, and he knew himself
The sacrifice to some rich-landed lout, [DROWNED
Who reading in his morning's *Times* FOUND
Reads this, and smiles, and lights a fresh cigar,
But recollecting decency, growls out
"Poor devil," takes a sheet of sented note,
And scrawls his toadish sympathy:—

Dear Flo,

So shocked about young Ellaby. I hope
You will not take it much to heart: you know

It wasn't your fault if you loved me best—
Was it, now? May I call on Saturday
And drive you to the meet?

Your loving
James.

Oh no! I look upon that innocent face,
The fond and faithful eyes, the soft kind mouth,
And swear that hers was not the hand that wrote
This man's death-warrant, but she sat alone
Sad-eyed and sick at heart, yet cherishing
Hope against hope, the while another snared
(Was it not for her own dear daughter's good?) *
Each post that came or went, and at the last
Sought by two words to make an end of all,
And made it—thus.

The verdict was "Found drowned:
No evidence to show how the deceased
Came," and so on. No evidence? Good God!

1874.

---

* "Basely contriving their dear daughter's good."
TENNYSON, *Aylmer's Field.*

THE ISTHMUS OF SUEZ.

THE ISTHMUS OF SUEZ.

AN utmost desolation, a wild waste
Of primal nakedness ere nature graced
The new-born earth with earliest drapery
Of green. Here never beareth any tree,
Here never blooms a flower: the groundling weed,
Whereof, unless to kill, men take no heed
Beneath our northern skies, here found should reign
The soil's one paragon, and this sad plain
Revel in verdurous riot. *Now* the sand
Lays out its weary leagues to either hand
Uncheckered, save where dusky camels move
Upon the low horizon. From above
No sweet-throat bird e'er makes with tremulous song
The silence voiceful and the way less long.
And for small pity shall ye look upon
The brazen-canopied heaven: the southern sun
Glares lidless there; alone a thin faint streak,
Along the northward limit, points where break
The far-off murmurs of the Syrian sea.

This is the land—the land whereunto ye
Who with my song would wander hand in hand
Must strain unwilling feet: for such a land
Ye must forsake * your old memorial towers
Bosomed mid avenues, made glad with flowers,
And lapped with pleasant streams.
Yet not the less
For that it seems of little loveliness
Hath this wan desert ancient heritage
Of marvellous memories, but on the page
Of storied names this name is also writ
So bright Time's touch shall scarcely darken it.

For hither oftenwhile in earth's young day
Came great old patriarchs, upon their way
To Canaan or to Mizraïm. Here trod
The saviour-prophet from the mount of God
Returning. Arab shepherds o'er these sands
Swept to the domination of new lands.†
Here passed to Asian conquest, and again
With captive peoples crouching in his train,
Sesostris; here Cambyses passed; and he
Whose name still lives upon the southern sea,

* Written at Oxford.
† The "Shepherd-Kings" who conquered Egypt.

Insatiate Alexander. Then the dread
Cæsarian eagles, and the muffled tread
Of old Cæsarian legionaries. And then
The mightier Victor and one Prince of men
Lulled in a mother's breast. No visible band
About Him marching in the desert sand
Stamp earthly footprints, but Heaven's own array,
Viewless and trackless, tend Him on His way.

Who next? Alas, the devastating sword
Of Amru's warriors; * then thy Turkish horde,
Selim.* Anon a second Cæsar † led
New Gauls, fresh eagles. Last came Ali, fed
With scarce a less ambition, to the field
Of glorious Konyeh, where the sovran reeled
Beneath the vassal's arm, and Egypt rose
Triumphant o'er a hecatomb of foes.

Such hero-phantoms, such brave memories
Cling to this weariest desert. But shall these,
These only, be thy register of fame,
O land, and must I blazen forth thy name
For this thing chiefest, that upon thee stood
The feet of some man swift to shed the blood

---

* The Saracen and Tatar conquerors of Egypt.
† Buonaparte.

Of men his brothers? Must we, soothly, go
So far a-south, to sing *thee?* Do we know
No nearer regions in our own cold north
Where kings have marched and emperors gone forth
In name of fairest right to do foul wrong?

Nay, rather let me tune for thee my song
To words of but one single work of good,
One single work binding the fellowhood
Of nations, garnering for him who wrought
True tender tribute of the hole world's thought,
Sweeter than softest flattery of lays.

Therefore at such a work I bid you gaze
On-passing where the azure canopy
Sinks to yon westward limit. Ye shall see
Thin masts rise slowly from the level land,
Dark hulls that come and vanish. Ye shall stand
Beside a mighty current at the last,
Watching the freighted argosies float past,
Bound for the Syrian or the Ethiop sea.

For here is cleft that seeming unity
Of continent entwined with continent
Midst of this wilderness. But here is rent
Rather their true disunion, and the bar

That made the path from land to land more far.
Here mingled with the gulf Arabian flow
The midland waters, here the great ships go
—From some thronged haven echoing with the roar
Of winds Atlantic, or some purple shore
Of fragrant Insulind, mid southern waves
Soft cradled. Thence no more the mariner braves
The angry Cape, but through this desert gray
Ploughs with a cheery heart his minished way.

For this in days of old great monarchs toiled
Through rolling ages: but time holely spoiled
The ill-nurtured work, long centuries agone,
That, in our living, being freshly sown
Hath ripened at the last to perfect fruit.

Foremost wert thou, Lesseps, still resolute
Against a hole world's mockery, to pierce
This stubborn wilderness. Men shall rehearse
Thy deed, about thy name shall honour spread
A widening halo, till the years be dead,
And with them each man's deed and each man's name.

Nor shall thy part be all unknown to fame,
Saïd, whose lofty purpose led the way,
And firm endeavour. Though the darksome day

Came all too soon to thee, thy record lives:
Death shall not rob thee of what glory gives.

And thou, Ismail, beneath whose fostering sway
Flashed over shores Nilotic brighter ray
Of promise, think not thou shalt be forgot
Whereso these names be storied. Thou hast wrought
Not least this glorious issue, nor shalt least
Reap due of honour—thou who with thy East
Wouldst link our West, burying the ancient feud
Of race and race, to their true brotherhood
Calling these twain once more—the wide world's friend
Not less than Egypt's glory.

Such an end,
Such men, such labour, are they not more sweet
Than laureled brows and blood-embathen feet?
Throw off the haze of victory, tear away
The flimsy glamour from your eyes, and say
Which, think ye, are most sweet for GOD to see?
Which shall look fairest in eternity?

And said I, then, that in a desolate land,
Sultry, and silent, with me ye should stand?
Ah, rather, if ye gaze aright, this place
Shall be to you more filled with subtle grace

Than if upon some soft hillside ye lay
Where beechen leaves shut out the noontide day,
Passing to dreamland, listening the sound
Of tiny honey-gatherers flocking round
A wild-rose thicket faintly odorous.

For, though there be no arbour, bounteous
Of dainty perfume, though no pasture fair,
No flower to blossom and no tree to bear,
No sound of bee or bird, here shall ye find
(Haply have found) that pleasaunce of the mind
Where hopes unblighted are the tender shoots,
Glad thoughts the happy flowers, the mellow fruits
Teachings of noble memories; there good deeds
Breathe fragrance; there, more soft than Lydian reeds,
To countless wealth of luscious notes a voice
Sings one word only, but that word 'Rejoice.'

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And shall not one brief page be writ,
Not one poor stanza, in his praise,
Whose various ear and tutored wit
Once judged our humble lays—

Himself from out the rhyming throng
Conspicuous in the power divine
To softly tune the graceful song
Or urge the vigorous line?

Though not to me be given to frame
Sweet hymnings of memorial verse,
I, if none other, to his name
This faltering word rehearse,

That, whether from our groves apart,
Or whether where our waters roll,
There dwelt not any nobler heart,
A more fair-favoured soul;

And, though his old familiar foot
We miss, he is not wholly fled;
And, though his kindly voice is mute,
He is not wholly dead.

But still its subtle fragrance gives
In death the summer's short-lived rose;
And still with us his record lives,
His memory sweetly blows.

And, though I strike with little art
These hasty notes on jarring strings,
To Nature's touch in many a heart
Their untaught burden rings.

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ΝΕΙΚΕΟΜΕΣ ποταμὸν τὸν ἀμείλιχον ὃς κατέδυσε
πασίφιλον πικροῖς † κύμασιν ἠίθεον·
δόξασκεν ποταμὸς δ' ἄρ' ἀναιδὴς ἄντιον ἄμμιν
ἀπύειν, ἀδινᾷ φρικὶ κυλινδόμενος,
"ὦ ξένε, μή μ' ἄγαν ὧδε καθάπτεο κερτομίοισι
ζωὰν ὃς Λυκίδᾳ δῶκα καὶ οὐ θάνατον·
τῷ θανάτωσα δέμας, ψυχὰν δέ οἱ οὐ θανάτωσα,
ἦκα δὲ πὰρ ποταμοῖς ναίεμεν Ἡλυσίοις·
τῶν λοῦται Λυκίδας, πίνει δὲ φερέσβιον ὕδωρ
ἀντιλαβὼν ὅλοῳ πώματος ἀμβρόσια.

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* "Thus sang the uncouth swain ... warbling his *Doric* lay."—MILTON, *Lycidas*.

† Salt.

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